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The Adoration of Saint Antonis of Padua

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
 OF THE
 PICTURE,
 A GRAND ALTAR PIECE,
 FROM THE
 CAPUCHIN CONVENT, AT CADIZ,
 REPRESENTING
 The Adoration of Saint Antonio, of Padua,
 PAINTED
 BY MURILLO,
 AND WHICH WAS EXHIBITED AT THE EGYPTIAN HALL, PICCADILLY,
 IN THE YEAR 1826;

Since which period it has remained in the possession of the Proprietor.

LAMBETH:

H. KEMSHEAD, PRINTER, LOWER KENNINGTON LANE.

1856.

17002

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THE
ADORATION
OF
ST. ANTONIO OF PADUA.

THIS picture was painted by Murillo, about the year 1650, soon after his return from Madrid, to which city he went, taking up his abode there for a considerable time, under the auspices of Valasquez, for the express purpose of correcting and improving his first, or crude style, by a severe study of those fine specimens of the works of Corregio, Titian, Rubens, and Vandyke, with which that capital was known to abound. The success which attended this laudable object of his ambition, will be fully demonstrated by a careful examination of the varied beauties, both of composition and colouring, that are presented to the eye in the powerful work now before us.

As the circumstance which occasioned the painting of this picture possesses no small degree of interest, and as the accuracy of the account can be relied on, it may not be inapplicable to relate it briefly in this place.

Murillo had a brother, whose enthusiastic and peculiar turn of mind, after various ebullitions, unfortunately led to a loss of reason : in this melancholy state, he was found by the Capuchin Monks of Cadiz ;—received into their convent, where a safe asylum was afforded to him, and through their long continued

and soothing attentions, he was ultimately restored to a sound mind, and finally became one of their fraternity. Murillo, whose gratitude was proportioned to his ardent natural affection, hastened to the convent, as soon as the fruits of his industry enabled him to offer a pecuniary compliment, at all adequate to the signal benefit he felt he had received through the person of his brother, but the money was at once delicately and generously refused. He then requested that the fraternity would, at least, in token of his gratitude, accept from him a picture upon any subject they might suggest, to which proposition they at length assented; fixing, as a subject, upon the Adoration of Antonio of Padua, to which Saint a chapel in their convent had been dedicated. Such, briefly, was the origin of this picture, and it is little to be wondered at, that the very best skill of the master should have been exerted upon a labour which was to express his best affections, and that the possession of such a treasure should have been prized by its owners with a more than ordinary regard. In the very convent it was designed to adorn, it was painted,* and therein it remained, an object little short of adoration to the religious of the city, and of admiration to connoisseurs from all countries, until that time of "*grievous necessity*," mentioned in the certificate of authenticity, which so reluctantly forced the fraternity to part with it. It was not, however, without considerable difficulty that the picture was

* It was in this same convent that the painter met with the accident which caused his death, by a fall from a scaffold while painting his last great work, "The Marriage of St. Catherine," also painted for these Capuchins. He died here in 1682, aged sixty-four, having been born in Seville, not at Pilas, as generally, but erroneously, stated.

permitted to change its place, nor would it ultimately have been allowed to quit the country, but for the use made of the name and influence of an English nobleman, of high consideration. Its being situated at a sea-port, was also a circumstance very favourable to its removal, and a safe asylum being afforded to it, at that time, by one of his Britannic Majesty's ships, greatly facilitated its departure. The Spanish law, prohibiting, under the severest penalties, the exportation of works of their great native painters, is still unrepealed, although its powers have been relaxed in this instance, and in one far more galling to the feelings of all Spaniards, namely, the extraction of those pictures of the same great master, from Seville, which recently formed the gallery of Marshal Soult, at Paris.

The present picture, confessedly the finest composition of the master in this country, and competing powerfully with whatever of excellence may exist of him in any other, has fully confirmed the judgment of the British connoisseur, as to the merits of a painter hitherto but imperfectly known in this kingdom; and justifies the high title with which his countrymen dignify him, namely — "THE PRINCE OF SPANISH PAINTERS," — "THE VANDYKE OF SPAIN."

TRANSLATION OF THE CERTIFICATE.

AUTHENTICATING THIS PICTURE OF ST. ANTONIO TO BE
THE GENUINE WORK OF MURILLO.

I, FRIAR PEDRO MARIA DE HARDALES, ex-Lecturer, and now Guardian of this Convent of Capuchins, certify, that a sale was made to Mr. Flinter, in the year 1822, of the canvass

on which is painted St. Antonia de Padua, kneeling, and receiving, in ecstasy, the Infant Jesus from the hands of the Virgin Mary,* in the midst of cherubins and angels, with a lily and a book on the one side, and an angel dividing the clouds on the opposite side. The size of it is seven feet, and the Saint three quarters high, which was placed on an altar dedicated to him. It is an undoubted fact, that the artist was the famous Murillo, as he was of other pictures that we now possess, having been obliged to sell this on account of the grievous necessity to which the calamities of the times had reduced us.

It has not been possible to ascertain the antiquity of this picture, or the number of years it has been in our possession, although there is no doubt that it is upwards of one hundred and seventy years. This is all the information I can give; and for proving the above facts, whenever occasion may require, I give these presents, signed by the other individuals who subscribe, in this our convent, in Cadiz, the 18th October, 1825.

(Signed)

FR. PEDRO MARIA DE HARDALES.

FR. JOSE DE MONDA.

P. FR. FRANCO. PAULA DE OLERON.

FR. MANUEL DE SOTO.

We, the undersigned, British merchants of the City of Cadiz, certify, that to our certain knowledge the above signatures of

* Thus designated by the religious of the convent; but it is believed the painter's intention was merely to represent, by this figure, an angel, and in that angel a portrait either of his sister or daughter. The head of St. Antonio is stated to be a portrait of the principal of the convent, at whose suggestion the subject was chosen.—*Note, by the Proprietor.*

Father Pedro Maria de Hardales, Guardian of the Convent of Capuchins, of this said City ; Father Jose de Monda, Father Manuel de Soto, and Father Franco. de Paula de Oleron, Friars of the aforesaid convent, are their true signatures and handwriting ; and that all faith and credit should be given thereto, as well in judicial as extra-judicial cases. In testimony we sign the present, in Cadiz, the 5th day of November, 1825.

(Signed)

THOMAS OSBORNE.

R. S. WHITE.

SAMUEL ROBERTS.

British Consulate, Cadiz, 16th November, 1825.

These are to certify, that the foregoing are the signatures of Messrs. Thomas Osborne, R. S. White, and Samuel Roberts, merchants of known respectability, established in this City, whose assertions deserves full faith, both in and out of judicature.

Given under my hand and seal of office, at Cadiz, this sixteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five.

(Signed)

J. M. BRACKENBURY,

Consul.

And sealed with the Consulate Seal.

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## SOME REMARKS

WHICH APPEARED IN THE PUBLIC JOURNALS ON  
THE MERITS OF THE FOREGOING PICTURE.

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*Extract from the NEW TIMES, March 9, 1826.*

“MURILLO,—A capital picture, by this great artist, is now at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. The subject is the ‘Adoration of the Infant Christ,’ by St. Anthony. The colouring is at once rich and delicate, and the design masterly. The figure of St. Anthony is sublimely simple, and the head of the Infant Saviour full of majesty and beauty. The picture has been lately brought to this country from the Capuchin Convent of Cadiz.”

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*Extract from the TIMES, March 13, 1826.*

## FINE ARTS.

“There is at present exhibiting, at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, a picture, which the proprietor alleges to be the work of Murillo. We would not venture to decide hastily upon the authenticity of the work, though we are certainly inclined to consider it an original. Murillo was, however, very successfully imitated by his pupils, some of whose works were, during his lifetime, taken for the best of his. The painting in question was recently purchased from the Convent of Capuchins, at Cadiz, where it is said to have been for the last one hundred and fifty years, and was always understood to have been painted expressly for the Convent, by Murillo. The subject is the ‘Adoration of St. Anthony.’ Murillo painted a picture of St. Anthony for the Cathedral of Seville, 1656, which is spoken of as one of his masterpieces. It is known too, that Murillo went to Cadiz to paint an altar-piece for the Convent of Capuchins, the subject of which was the betrothing of St. Catherine; but, falling ill there, he returned to Seville, and died in 1682. But whether the picture in question be really painted by Murillo or not, we have no hesitation in saying, that it is quite worthy of his pencil. The air of truth and nature which pervades the principal group—the happy contrast of colour

between the figures of the Infant Saviour, the Virgin, and St. Anthony, and the fine transparency of the flesh, set off by that judicious disposition of shade which is peculiar to Murillo, combine to render it one of the most glorious and attractive works of the great artist to whom it is attributed. Of all Murillo's works which we have seen, there are only two—'An Assumption,' and 'St. Thomas distributing Alms to the Poor,'—which we should be inclined to rank above it. The St. Anthony, in the present picture, resembles (if our recollection serves us), both in dress and countenance, the St. Thomas, in the picture to which we have alluded. The subdued tone of the bit of landscape which forms the back ground, helps admirably to give breadth and force to the figures. In short, the *tout ensemble* presents such a rich combination of harmonious colouring, and vigorous execution, as, unaided by other beauties, would alone stamp a masterpiece of art. If the price asked for the picture be not considered too high, we hope that the public will soon have the pleasure of seeing it in the National Gallery."

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*Copied from the TIMES of Friday, 17th March, 1826.*

"The proprietor of the picture attributed to Murillo, which was noticed a few days back in the 'Times,' has sent us the attestations of the Fathers of the Convent, from whom he purchased it, as to its having been in their possession for the last one hundred and fifty years. If he did this under the idea that we entertained any doubts as to the authenticity of the painting, he will find, by a reference to our notice, that he is mistaken. We stated, that our opinion was in favour of the genuineness of the work."

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*Extract from the SUNDAY TIMES,*

"One of the finest specimens that we have ever seen of the chaste, simple, and sublime style of the great Spanish master, Murillo, is now exhibiting at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. We would recommend Sirs C. Long, Beaumont, and Lawrence, to walk that way, when at leisure, and examine it. The proprietor, we hear, asks £5,000 for it, and in our opinion, it is cheaper at that price than the three paintings just added to the National Gallery for £9,000.

*Extract from the MORNING HERALD, April 21.*

"A fine specimen of the Spanish painter, Murillo, has recently been opened for public inspection at the Egyptian Hall. It is, perhaps, the largest composition in England by this artist, who appears, till within these few years, to have been much undervalued, and, indeed, but little known beyond his own country. He has, according to custom, waited more than one hundred years before he has been canonized.

"The subject of this, as we might have anticipated of a large historical picture painted in Spain, is from the monkish legends—'St. Anthony, of Padua, receiving in ecstasy the infant JESUS.' The choice of subject, and the manner of relating the story, are the most objectionable points of the picture; the Infant appears seated upon a cloud, but without its mother, whose presence is customary and indispensable on this subject, for St. Anthony received the infant from her hands; the figure at his side, which we imagine to be an attendant angel, cannot, with any propriety, be considered the Madonna; for, besides there being no authority for the Madonna wearing wings, it does not possess her character. The countenance of St. Anthony is too puerile! it has no more dignity than is conferred by a beard, but in every other respect the picture is admirable. It is a masterpiece for arrangement in *chiaro scuro*, and for its fine tone of colour. In the latter respect its merit is not a little enhanced by its originality, it being quite different from Titian, Rubens, and all the great colourists in its system of colour, and yet beautiful and perfect in its way. The whole is imbued with those rich brown tones which give a character to Murillo's works in general, and make them appear to have been painted at that moment, when—

'The western sun embrowns the moontide bowers,'

The flesh of the Infant CHRIST is remarkable for its brilliancy and delicacy; it forms the principal light in the picture, from which all the other objects gradually die away, after the manner of Corregio. The painting, as well as the expressions of several of the angels, is very beautiful. From the pencilling, we should judge that this picture was executed when Murillo was in his prime; it exhibits the great command of a man who had for years before been pursuing and discovering, and with slow care attempting to express truth, till at

length he had acquired an acuteness and discernment that enabled him to seize it instantaneously, and an obedience of hand that gave it to the canvass with equal quickness and facility."

### EGYPTIAN HALL, PICCADILLY.

"To the naturalist, to the antiquarian, to the artist, and the lover of the arts, to all who can enjoy a rich intellectual treat, the Egyptian Hall has been for many years an object of very powerful attraction. Thither, from the four quarters of the world, the most beautiful productions of nature, and the most curious specimens of art, have been continually brought; and as soon as they have gratified our curiosity, or added to our information, have been removed only to make way for others. Every new exhibition is generally as rare as it is interesting, and either shows us some additional discovery, some recompense of long and painful research, or informs us of some victory accomplished by the human mind. Since this establishment was commenced by its enterprising founder, perhaps there has never been so pleasing, so astonishing, or so varied a collection of exhibitions as there is at the present moment under its roof.

"Amongst other exhibitions that remain for us to notice, is MUEILLO's picture of 'THE ADORATION OF ST. ANTHONY.' The question as to its authenticity is now set at rest, by a certificate lately received from Cadiz, signed by the principal of the convent of Capuchins, at Cadiz, by whom it was sold 'in consequence of the grievous necessity to which the calamities of the times had reduced the brethren;' and by the still more important opinions of many of our most eminent connoisseurs. In the picture, St. Anthony is represented as kneeling, and receiving, in great ecstasy, the Infant Jesus: his sombre garb harmonizes very exquisitely with the shadowed parts of the painting, and is finely contrasted with the principal light, which seems so beautifully imagined to proceed from the Infant Saviour, and is shed so brilliantly over the groups of angels and cherubs by which he is surrounded. On the ground, the painter has introduced a lily placed upon a Bible lying on a rock—the emblems of strength and purity. The landscape in the distance is finely conceived. The picture is altogether of a most interesting character; and, undoubtedly, one of the finest productions of this great master. It is



amazingly rich and powerful in composition, vigorously coloured, and exquisitely finished; it would be a valuable addition to the National Gallery. Murillo has not been long estimated in this country according to his merits. The edict, by which Charles the Fourth prohibited the exportation of his paintings, continued to keep all his best works from England, until the necessities of the times forced their sale. His most valuable and perfect productions (eight in number) remain in the gallery of Marechal Soult, Duc de Dalmatio, notwithstanding the offer of £60,000, recently made by the British Government, to induce the Marechal to part with the remains of the spoil of his former governorship of Andalusia. A sum of £12,000 was offered for one of the eight, either the *Prodigal Son*, or *La Vierge de la Conception*, and was refused. But connoisseurs who have seen the picture now exhibiting, are divided as to which they give the preference.

"We have endeavoured, as far as our limits would permit, to give some idea of the various exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall. In conclusion, we have only to express a hope that those of our readers who may be induced to visit it in consequence of our observations, may be as much gratified as ourselves."—*Representative*, April 21.



FINIS.







